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LETTER DATED 30 AUGUST 1992 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A SPEECH MADE ON 17 AUGUST 1992 BY MR. QIAN QICHEN, STATE COUNCILLOR AND FOREIGN MINISTER OF CHINA, AT THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT AND SECURITY ISSUES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a speech made on 17 August 1992 by Mr. Qian Qichen, State Councillor and Foreign Minister of China, at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament and Security Issues in the Asia-Pacific Region.

I would be most grateful, Sir, if you could arrange for this text to be issued and circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Signed): Hou Zhitong
Ambassador for Disarmament Affairs
Permanent Mission of China to the
United Nations Office at Geneva

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Speech by Mr. Qian Qichen, State Councillor and Foreign Minister, at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament and Security Issues in the Asia-Pacific Region

17 August 1992

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in taking up the invitation to attend the opening session of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament and Security Issues in the Asia-Pacific Region. High-level government officials, well-known experts and scholars of the participating countries will take this opportunity to discuss in depth major issues such as security and disarmament in the world, and the Asia-Pacific region in particular, in the 1990s. This is of great significance to enhancing mutual understanding and promoting peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. On behalf of the Chinese Government, I wish to extend congratulations on the convocation of the Conference, thank its sponsors - the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, and warmly welcome foreign participants. I wish the Conference a success.

In recent years, the United Nations has made tremendous efforts in facilitating settlement of regional conflicts, promoting disarmament and arms control and maintaining world peace and security. The convocation of a series of conferences and seminars on disarmament and security in the Asia-Pacific region is part and parcel of these efforts. We hereby express our appreciation and support.

At present, the international situation is undergoing unprecedented changes. Such changes are very rare in peace-time. The bipolar pattern and half a century of East-West military confrontation have come to an end. These changes are conducive to the prevention of a new world war. However, they have not brought peace and tranquillity to the world. The old contradictions and conflicts are yet to be eliminated. As the equilibrium of forces in the world has been seriously disrupted, contradictions which were either hidden or relatively inconspicuous in the past have rapidly deteriorated into sharp and sanguinary conflicts or even local wars. The international situation has become all the more complicated, turbulent and volatile.

We are delighted to see, however, that the situation in the Asia-Pacific region is moving towards relaxation and stability. The political settlement of the Cambodian question according to the Paris Agreements is under way. Despite many set-backs and difficulties which have happened and will continue to happen, a peaceful settlement of the issue accords with the trend of the times, and national reconciliation conforms to the popular desire. The relations between Indo-China and ASEAN countries are improving. The decade-long Afghan War caused by foreign invasion has come to an end with the patriotic armed forces triumphant. The situation on the Korean Peninsula is further easing off as a result of the North-South reconciliation and major progress in the denuclearization process on the Peninsula. The relations among Asia-Pacific countries have generally developed, with deepened mutual trust, strengthened friendly and good-neighbourly ties and more stable

relationships among the big Powers. It should be particularly noted that the Asia-Pacific region is the most dynamic region in the world economy. Many countries in the region have initially embarked on a virtuous cycle of political stability guaranteeing economic development and economic development promoting political stability. This is a reliable basis for stability in the region. Of course, we are also aware of the fact that there are destabilizing factors in this region. For instance, some countries are still in a state of division; the historical disputes which have triggered many wars on the South Asian Subcontinent remain unresolved; territorial and border disputes and religious strifes still exist. If these problems are properly resolved in accordance with the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence governing State-to-State relations, it is entirely possible to maintain regional peace and stability.

With the end of the East-West confrontation and cold war, certain progress has been made in global disarmament and arms control. In Europe, a conventional disarmament process has started. The two major military Powers have reached several agreements on the reduction of various categories of nuclear weapons. The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council have agreed on a few norms for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the transfer of conventional weapons. And the negotiations on the Draft Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction are now at the concluding stage. The United States and Russia have cut their troops stationed in the Asia-Pacific region. Some countries have increased confidence-building and security-enhancing measures with their neighbours and some have reduced their border troops. At the same time we should note that in spite of world disarmament efforts, the major military Powers still possess a large quantity of over-kill nuclear weapons, and huge arsenals of sophisticated weapons and are developing space weapons. They still have strong offensive naval and air forces deployed in the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, some Asia-Pacific countries are still in military confrontation with each other. All these are incompatible with the growing trend towards peace, relaxation and stability in the region. It is an important task facing Asia-Pacific countries to seize the current favourable opportunity to adopt effective measures with a view to improving the security environment in the region. These measures constitute an important guarantee for regional peace and stability and for economic development of all countries in the region and serve their fundamental interests.

The security of the Asia-Pacific region is inseparable from that of each country in the region. If not every country enjoys security in the region, there is no regional security to speak of. One of the characteristics of the Asia-Pacific region is its diversity in terms of the size, wealth, strength, social system, ideology, religious belief, culture and custom of the various countries. The diversity requires all countries to respect each other, treat each other as equals and live in harmony. The post-war Asia-Pacific rim was a region of frequent local wars. A review of the local wars shows that all of them were caused by aggression waged by the big or strong against the small or weak in an attempt to impose their own social system, ideology and will upon the latter and that the aggressors have all ended in failure. A host of facts have shown that none of those engaged in hegemonic practices, military expansion in preparation for war or in military aggression has ended up well,

or could avoid going downhill, being defeated or even collapsing, no matter how strong they were. History teaches us that to ensure security of all countries, leaving aside disarmament and arms control, it is more important that a country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected and maintained, in particular that the big, rich and strong countries should respect the independence and sovereignty of the small, weak and poor ones, and that all acts of hegemonism, aggression and expansion in whatever form should be opposed and prevented. This is the key to, and a prerequisite for, regional security.

Regional security also hinges on the overall world situation and the state of international relations. During the current historical transitional period, with major changes taking place in the global pattern, the future of the world and the evolution of international relations largely depend on the nature of a new international order to be established. We believe that to establish a fair, rational and stable new international political and economic order on the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence is the only way to ensure the independent and equal status of all countries, their peaceful coexistence, mutually beneficial cooperation and common development, and to lay a solid foundation for lasting world and regional peace, stability and security.

Asia is the birthplace of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the Ten Principles of the Bandung Conference. The concept and principle of peaceful coexistence initiated by Asian countries have already been universally acknowledged and accepted in the international community. It is a valuable spiritual asset for a healthy international relationship and for regional and global peace. If all the Asia-Pacific countries value and observe these principles, regional disputes and problems left over from history will not be difficult to solve and it will be possible to establish a new, just and rational political and economic order in the Asia-Pacific region first.

The Asia-Pacific region occupies an important position and has a significant influence in today's world. The forthcoming twenty-first century will afford it greater opportunities and pose more challenges to it. With a view to promoting regional disarmament and security in an all-round way as well as regional peace and development, I wish to share my views with you:

1. In developing relations with one another, Asia-Pacific countries should strictly abide by the United Nations Charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, respect each other, treat each other with sincerity, cooperate with each other on an equal footing and live in amity. They should join their efforts to turn the Asia-Pacific region into one of peace, security, good-neighbourliness and prosperity.

2. None of the Asia-Pacific countries should seek regional or subregional hegemony or establish spheres of influence, set up or participate in a military bloc directed against another country, build military bases on

foreign soil or station its troops abroad. Nor should it infringe upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity or interfere in the internal affairs of other countries under whatever pretext.

3. All of the Asia-Pacific countries should commit themselves to developing good-neighbourly and friendly relations with their neighbours. They should settle territorial and border disputes as well as other problems left over from history through peaceful consultations in accordance with the relevant international conventions and United Nations resolutions instead of resorting to force or threat of force. Peaceful negotiations may be conducted when conditions are ripe; otherwise, a dispute or problem may be shelved until conditions are ripe. Pending settlement of a dispute, the countries concerned should adopt security-enhancing and confidence-building measures so as to avoid possible unforeseen situations or conflicts.

4. None of the Asia-Pacific countries should engage in any form of arms race. The defence capabilities of each country should be kept at a level commensurate with its legitimate defence needs. Those countries with the largest nuclear arsenals and arsenals of the most sophisticated conventional weapons should continue to bear special responsibility and fulfil corresponding obligations in disarmament, support the establishment of nuclear-free zones or zones of peace in various subregions and pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States or regions.

5. To promote common prosperity and development, Asia-Pacific countries should increase economic exchanges and cooperation. They need to expand and deepen the bilateral and multilateral economic relations between and among them and strengthen and improve APEC and other regional economic cooperation organizations so as to raise regional economic cooperation to new levels.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past decade and more since the introduction of the policies of reform and opening up, China has unswervingly focused on economic development, reform and opening up and scored tremendous achievements. It is enjoying political and social stability and sustained economic growth. Its aggregate national strength and people's living standards have improved markedly. After years of economic growth, China's GNP this year is again expected to grow by about 9 per cent. At present, people throughout the country are working hard to deepen the reform and open China wider to the outside world, in an effort to raise the economy to a new high. A stable and economically growing China with a population of 1.1 billion is an important factor for peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

In order to modernize and focus on economic development, China needs a long-term peaceful and stable international environment, particularly in the surrounding areas. China pursues an independent foreign policy of peace. It has made maintenance of peace in the region and the world at large the overarching goal of its foreign policy and has taken development of friendly and good-neighbourly relations with surrounding countries as its set State policy. It has made unremitting efforts and due contributions to that end.

China upholds the principled stand of opposing hegemonism and power politics and will not seek hegemony and spheres of influence. As one of the initiators of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, China is committed to these principles. China has no military bases overseas, nor has it any soldiers stationed abroad. China presents no threat to any country, nor does it interfere in the internal affairs of others.

China has settled border questions left over from the past with many countries through consultations on an equal footing and on the principle of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation. It will also endeavour to seek a satisfactory solution to the outstanding boundary issues and/or territorial disputes with the countries concerned in the same spirit.

China has always attached great importance to and actively participated in the disarmament efforts of the international community. It stands for effective disarmament and arms control in a fair, reasonable, comprehensive and balanced manner. It has all along been in favour of complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear, biological, chemical, and space weapons. The possession by China of a limited number of nuclear weapons is solely for the purpose of self-defence. Besides, China has unilaterally undertaken not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States and regions. It supports non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It has formally acceded to the NPT treaty and agreed to observe MTCR. It has actively participated in the negotiations on the Chemical Weapons Convention and hopes to see the Convention concluded at an early date.

China's military expenditure has always been kept at a very low level, much lower than that of any other big Power. A few years ago, China unilaterally cut down its armed forces by one million. This gives full expression to the sincere desire of the Chinese Government and people for peace and their courage in maintaining peace.

Mr. Chairman,

It is the shared goal and mission of all countries in the Asia-Pacific region to promote regional disarmament and security and ensure regional peace and development. So long as all countries have good faith, trust one another, carry out active cooperation and make concerted efforts, there is every promise of peace, stability and sustained development in the Asia-Pacific region in the 1990s and even the next century.

Thank you.